Abstract

In Montana, limited education resources focus on effective standards-aligned education tools that promote literacy and enable our youth to engage in activities that result in college-/ career-ready skills. This is particularly important for the approximately 7,000 secondary-aged (grades 7-12) students with disabilities served in Montana's public schools. The most recent (2012) IDEA Part B Annual Performance Report indicates that just under 900 students with disabilities graduated from high school, a rate of 80.6%. In that same report, it is noted that 260 students dropped out of school. By national standards, the census of Montana students served through special education is quite small; less than many individual school districts across the country. Yet, the transition preparation needs for these students are no less important than for their counterparts in other states. To address this issue, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), the Montana Office of Disability Employment and Transition (DET), and the Montana University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), The Rural Institute, have banded together to provide training, technical assistance and support to school districts, special education cooperatives, and local schools to improve outcomes for children. The Scaling-Up EnvisionIT initiative is yet another collaborative opportunity for these entities to promote, implement, scale up and systematize a curriculum tool that focuses on preparing students with standards-based transition-focused skills. Our goals are to: (a) establish an EnvisionIT Implementation Team through the MT IDEA personnel development (CSPD) network (which has a strong focus on teacher development across special and general education); (b) build and implement an "Awareness to Adoption" plan with LEA special education directors, secondary school administrators and LEA superintendents/ associates; and over three years, (c) implement EnvisionIT as a credit-generating curriculum tool for Montana's students in grades 8-12. As a result of our efforts, we anticipate the following outcomes: (a) EnvisionIT is a standard curriculum tool in secondary schools, for students with and without disabilities; and, completion of EnvisionIT is a requirement for high school graduation across Montana.

Based on the nine implementation drivers identified by Fixsen, et al. (2005), we will coordinate the efforts of the implementation team to work with selected experimental schools and school districts/special education cooperatives to adopt and integrate the curriculum, while following the prescribed research protocol. The team will participate in treatment fidelity activities to improve their understanding of the successes, issues and specific barriers related to implementation. The team will work closely with the designated coordinator to build curriculum support for subsequent year implementation and will facilitate opportunities with administrators and policy boards to adopt the curriculum as a graduation requirement.

We anticipate a variety of challenges in the implementation of EnvisionIT. These include the: (a) independence and local school district resistance to state or federal mandates; (b) competition for limited instructional time, including the lack of understanding of the benefits of using the EnvisionIT curriculum tool; and, (c) inconsistent communication across many small, schools/ LEAs in Montana. These barriers will be mitigated in a variety of ways. First, efforts are being made to include local administrators in this application so that it is not "sprung" on them if/ when Montana is selected to participate. Discussion with local administrators (through the 6 affiliates of the School Administrators of Montana (SAM) organization) regarding the EnvisionIT tool and its alignment to the common core are highlighted. Second, through the Montana Comprehensive System of Personnel Development--CSPD (funded largely with IDEA funds, but often includes a wide general education audience), ongoing training and materials will be made available to administrators and educators regarding EnvisionIT's role in supplementing and enhancing, or maybe replacing, curricula designed to meet specific common core standards. Finally, experimental school administrators and teachers will be connected to an 'invite-only' listserv and an "EnvisionIT Community of Practice." Professional development and family-focused materials will be housed on or linked from a single

location (OPI CSPD website). Each of these three strategies uses existing resources and networks thereby increasing the probability of sustainability once grant funds are expended.

DATE

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RE: Montana EnvisionIT Participation

Dr. Blair:

I support your application to the Ohio State University Nisonger Center to include Montana students in the Scaling-Up EnvisionIT project. We have considered the project abstract and additional information you provided and believe that our participation will benefit the students we serve. We want to be considered for selection as an experimental site. We understand that if not selected the first year, there will be opportunities in future years. Most importantly, we understand that the EnvisionIT curriculum is an accessible web-based tool to help our students improve their academic and transition outcomes. We want all our students to benefit from this innovative curriculum tool.

The district/cooperative that I represent currently serves ## students with disabilities. Of those, ## are currently enrolled in grades 8-12. ADD ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO INCLUDE REGARDING YOUR DISTRICT/COOP.

If selected as an experimental site, we will work with you and the researchers at the OSU Nisonger Center to implement the program as designed. We will work with your staff to complete the required paperwork, engage students and families, and we will participate in the professional development and technical assistance activities, and fidelity activities designed to ensure appropriate implementation of the EnvisionIT program with our students. In addition, we will work with our local administrators and Board(s) of Education to approve EnvisionIT as a standard curriculum tool to help all students become college/career ready. We will likewise work towards making program completion a requirement for a high school diploma.

We look forward to working with you in the years to come. Thank you for reaching out and including us in this innovative opportunity.

Sincerely,

NAME AND TITLE